

Sense Making Optimisation

Sense Making Optimisation maximises (optimises) understanding (making sense), for all audiences, in ten stages. Sense Making Optimisation (SMO) is strategic, holistic and evidence based, maximising your reach and effectiveness.

SMO provides a framework for communication planning, delivery and evaluation, for audiences with high, average and low literacy (everyone!). SMO includes people with sensory, memory, communication and learning disabilities.

SMO is suitable for printed, digital, visual and auditory media, including reports, letters, leaflets, web pages, videos, surveys and marketing materials, and more. Most SMO stages and techniques are also applicable to dialogue and social media.

SMO incorporates Easier English to update and expand traditional writing techniques, such as Plain English and Easy Read.

Easier English

Easier English makes language easier to read, understand and retain. The writing and adaptation techniques in Easier English draw on contemporary research and experience in reading, linguistics and disability. Rather than a traditional 'one style fits all' approach, Easier English is responsive to audience need.

SMO and Easier English can be applied to other languages, although specific techniques may vary according to language structure.

Guide to Sense Making Optimisation

Content

Ensure your information is what your audience wants and needs to know.

Communications must be interesting and relevant, to be engaging and memorable.

Concepts (Easier English)

Use familiar words and concepts.

Glossaries are most suitable for medium-high literacy readers. For other audience groups, avoid multiple word definitions, and adapt at other levels to support understanding.

Sentences (Easier English)

Reduce the complexity of your sentence structure. Reducing complexity automatically decreases sentence length. (Simply shortening sentences does not always reduce complexity, and can increase difficulty in other ways.)

Cohesion (Easier English)

Different audiences need different types and amounts of cohesive ties, to connect ideas. Ties particularly support understanding for recipients who have little topic knowledge, medium to low literacy, visual impairment, and difficulties understanding and remembering language.

Images should also be cohesive, to support understanding.

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Text structure and design (Easier English)

Organise your information sequentially and logically. Ensure text structure and information hierarchy are appropriate for your audience's literacy and language needs.

Use textual features that are already familiar to your audience.

Images

The type, number and purpose of images are guided by your audience's needs, and your communication goals.

On web pages, use alternative text to describe the purpose of images.

Document and graphic design

Choose design features, eg. layout, colour and font, which are familiar and accessible to your intended audience.

Sensory and symbolic systems

Choose sensory and symbolic systems which match your audience's needs, eg. BSL (visual), spoken word (auditory), Braille (tactile).

Formats and media channels

How your communication is presented and stored should meet your audience's language, cognitive, physical and sensory needs. Channels can combine more than one sensory and symbolic system, to support access and understanding.

Context

Can your audience find your communications where and when they need it? Are your communications appropriate, and accessible in context?

Identify and, where possible, manage external factors which affect how your audience finds, interprets and uses your communications.

More resources

Accessible Information Ladder

The Accessible Information Ladder provides a tool for the delivery and evaluation of information, which correlates with the stages of Sense Making Optimisation.

See <http://www.inklecomms.co.uk/resources/accessible-information-ladder/>.

Advice and training

If you would like advice or training in Sense Making Optimisation, Easier English, or the Accessible Information Ladder, please contact Rosalind@inklecomms.co.uk.

Inklecomms offers a quality mark for Easier English. For more information, please get in touch.